

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Employment Committee held on Monday, 10 March 2014 at 2.00 pm at The Executive Meeting Room - Third Floor, The Guildhall.

(NB These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda and reports for the meeting which can be found at [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk))

### **Present**

Councillor Steven Wylie (Chair)  
Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Leo Madden  
Councillor Rob Wood  
Councillor Donna Jones  
Councillor Luke Stubbs

### **Officers Present**

David Williams, Chief Executive  
Jon Bell, Head of HR, Legal & Performance  
Gemma Limburn, Assistant Head of Human Resources - Strategy

Councillor John Ferrett was in the public gallery.

#### **1. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **2. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Rob Wood declared personal, non-prejudicial interests in that his son-in-law works for the city council and his wife is a member of Unison.

#### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 October 2013 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Employment Committee held on 1 October 2013 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.**

#### **4. Localism Act - Pay Policy Statement (AI 4)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Jon Bell introduced the report and said that it was a statutory requirement to prepare a pay policy statement for each financial year approved by full council no later than 31 March of that financial year and that it must be published on the council's website. He also explained that the pay multiple has to be included in the statement and this represents the relationship between the

base salaries of its highest and lowest employees and is currently a ratio of 12:1 which he advised was well within the limits of acceptability as compared with central government and other similar organisations. In response to a query Jon Bell undertook to find out whether or not central government abided by the same rules ie whether it also publishes the pay multiple.

**RESOLVED that the Employment Committee approves the draft pay policy statement attached as Appendix 1 to go forward for approval by the full council on 18 March 2014.**

## **5. Sickness Absence Quarterly Report (AI 5)**

### **(TAKE IN REPORT)**

Two deputations were made on this report. The first was from Mr Richard White of Unite the Union. The second deputation was made by Lee Sprake, of Unison. The chair thanked Mr White and Mr Sprake for their deputations.

Jon Bell introduced the report and said that it was part of the regular reporting to Employment Committee on actions being taken that have a positive effect on the levels of sickness absence across the services. He particularly drew members' attention to the increased accuracy of the source data and the introduction and consistency of sickness absence data from one source that had been introduced by HR in April 2013. He said that overall, levels are decreasing and though incremental, they are quite significant.

In response to questions, the following matters were clarified

- Mr Bell said that the dramatic drop in sickness absence levels was probably owing to a combination of factors for example much work had been done by HR working with managers across the organisation. HR had also targeted areas where sickness was higher than average both to provide support and also to introduce more robust management actions.
- Jon Bell said that the wellbeing week had not been withdrawn but it was decided whether or not to have a wellbeing week on a year by year basis. It had been noted that the number of people attending had declined steadily. However some aspects had continued for example offering health checks to employees. He said that consideration had to be given as to how best to use scarce resources. Consultation about wellbeing in the workplace was taking place at present.
- With regard to a query on the Oracle system, Jon Bell said that the bolt on that had been purchased had not been rolled out across all PCC as yet but it was expected to be phased in by the end of this year. However managers are using the system frequently and there was no reason in his view to think that accurate recording was not taking place.
- A Member commented that the staff opinion surveys over the last 12-18 months had shown that a fair proportion of staff had said that they

were not proud to be working for PCC and that this could have an influence over short term sickness. If staff were provided with more facilities (for example Wi-Fi areas) this could perhaps make a difference to feelings of positivity which may then be reflected in reducing short term sickness.

- It was confirmed that reducing long term sickness had a much more dramatic effect on the figures but that these were often the more difficult cases to deal with.
- It was agreed that instead of having a target expressed in numbers expressing the figure as a percentage might give a more accurate picture of sickness absence.
- Members felt that the offer of flu vaccinations to all Portsmouth City Council employees was a worthwhile initiative and felt that it would be worthwhile repeating the offer with improved publicity.

It was proposed by Councillor Le Madden and seconded by Councillor Rob Wood that an extra recommendation be included to thank all those services who have taken positive action to reduce sickness absence and this was agreed.

**RESOLVED that**

- (1) the committee continues to monitor sickness absence on a quarterly basis and to ensure appropriate management action is taken to address absenteeism; and**
- (2) to thank all those services who have taken positive action to reduce sickness absence.**

**6. Living Wage for Portsmouth (AI 6)**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

Two deputations were made on this report. The first was from Richard White of Unite the Union who was in favour of implementing the living wage but against this being done by way of a supplement. The second deputation was made by Lee Sprake of Unison who supported the comments made in the previous deputation.

The chair thanked the contributors for their deputations.

Gemma Limburn introduced the report and explained that to lift the whole grade structure sufficiently high to lift bands 1 to 3 above the living wage would be prohibitively expensive hence the recommendation for an unconsolidated payment which would also allow for annual review and reflected the approach of the majority of local authorities and assisted with potential equal pay implications. Gemma Limburn said that with regard to the financial implications the council will need to commit to an ongoing uplift of

salaries in line with any inflationary changes to the living wage rate which at present is projected to be 2% higher than the city council pay award. However this would not be a significant pressure on budgets after the initial implementation. If the living wage continues to increase at a higher rate than the national pay awards increase, then it is possible this could affect the pay structure further in the future where staff on spinal point 11 drop below the living wage and need to be moved to the next spinal column point. Gemma Limburn also said that she had begun discussions with the schools and had further schools forums to attend over the coming months but the response so far had been positive.

During discussion the following points were raised

- It was confirmed that PCC has no control over schools and school staff.
- Concern was raised that if the council commits to an ongoing uplift of salaries in line with any changes to the national rate, this could in effect be outsourcing its control over pay increases.
- Members felt that there would be ongoing inflationary issues in that staff would expect the differentials in pay grades to be maintained.
- It was confirmed that if the living wage were to be adopted then this would be pensionable but it was confirmed also that the financial comments have taken this into consideration.

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson and seconded by Councillor Steve Wylie that under the provisions of section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) 1985, the press and public be excluded for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that the report contains information defined as exempt in section 100L and by reference Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972

**RESOLVED that the meeting move into closed session.**

The Committee considered the implications of the legal advice given concerning the various scenarios relating to the concept of "living wage". Agreement was reached that a further report would be useful once the schools had indicated their preferred approach.

Following discussion in exempt session, it was proposed by Councillor Vernon-Jackson and seconded by Councillor Steven Wylie that the meeting moved back into open session.

**RESOLVED that the meeting move into open session..**

It was proposed by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson and seconded by Councillor Steven Wylie that an additional recommendation be added that a

further report be brought back to this committee once schools have indicated their preferred approach. This was agreed.

**RESOLVED that Employment Committee agree**

- (1) A separate discretionary supplement/allowance to be paid as an addition to basic pay to achieve the living wage at £7.65 an hour for all those staff currently SCP11 (at this stage excluding agency and casual staff, and those employed in schools).**
- (2) An annual review of the continued payment of the supplement to staff in line with annual increases in the living wage.**
- (3) The initial implementation and launch of the living wage prior to the Living Wage Week in November 2014.**
- (4) That discussions should continue with PCC schools to encourage their implementation of the living wage.**
- (5) That further consideration be given to the implications of implementing the living wage for agency and casual staff.**
- (6) That the living wage is to be applied only to hours worked at base rate of pay and not to hours with any enhancement or additional allowances.**
- (7) That a further report be brought back to this Committee (once schools have indicated their preferred approach to Living Wage) to include a reassessment of the implications of possible implementation across PCC.**

**7. Date of Next Meeting (AI 7)**

The date of the next scheduled meeting is 17 June 2014.

The meeting concluded at 3.25 pm.

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Councillor Steven Wylie  
Chair